

Processual Models of Radicalization into Terrorism: A Best Fit Framework Synthesis

Ghent - ESC | 19.09.2019

Stéphanie De Coensel

t. +32 9 264 97 02

f. +32 9 264 79 21

Stephanie.Decoensel@UGent.be



SEQUENCE OF THE TRAJECTORY TOWARDS TERRORISM



how radicalization occurs (i.e. **courses**),
rather than the question **why** radicalization might occur (i.e. **causes**)

research

publications

consultancy

conferences

www.ircp.org



Institute for
International Research on Criminal Policy
Ghent University

Stéphanie De Coensel
+32 9 264 97 02
Stephanie.DeCoensel@UGent.be

critical note on
PROCESSUAL MODELS **02**

RESULTS **04**
thematic analysis & meta-framework

01 **RELEVANCE**
for counter-terrorism policy

03 **METHODOLOGY**
Best Fit Framework Synthesis

05 **DISCUSSION**

research

publications

consultancy

conferences



IRCP

Institute for
International Research on Criminal Policy
Ghent University

www.ircp.org

Stéphanie De Coensel
+32 9 264 97 02
Stephanie.DeCoensel@UGent.be

RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY



To what extent is the
urge to intervene as
early as possible
supported by **theoretical**
or **empirical evidence on**
the **process of**
radicalization?

PRE-EMPTIVE TURN IN THE
COUNTER-TERRORISM CONTEXT

research

publications

consultancy

conferences



IRCP

Institute for
International Research on Criminal Policy
Ghent University

www.ircp.org

Stéphanie De Coensel
+32 9 264 97 02
Stephanie.DeCoensel@UGent.be

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. To what extent is radicalization seen as a chronological or sequential process?
2. To what extent has existing research succeeded in mapping the chronological sequence of the radicalization process?
3. To what extent are the existing models and frameworks consistent? What are the similarities or dissimilarities across the existing models? To what extent can these models be integrated as an evaluative framework of counterterrorism policy?

critical note on

PROCESSUAL MODELS

phase models numerous represented among efforts to map the pathways towards terrorism

BUT great deal of **criticism** due to often dogmatic linear character



phases are **not necessarily successive** in nature (overlap, skipping of stages, abandon process, etc.)

nevertheless, **processual basis** is only thing experts agree upon



inclusion in study: models that represent a certain process, in the sense of “a sequence of events, involving steps or operations that are usually ordered and/or interdependent”, but at the same time acknowledge that “it does not necessarily imply a simple deterministic account”

(Taylor, M., & Horgan, J. (2006). A conceptual framework for addressing psychological process in the development of the terrorist. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 18, 585–601.)

www.ircp.org

critical note on

PROCESSUAL MODELS

Shortcomings existing literature / models

- ☐ Research highly fragmented
- ☐ Models isolated, making little or no reference to each other
- ☐ Existing literature reviews often limited or partial in scope

Overarching theoretical framework still needed

research

publications

consultancy

conferences



Institute for
International Research on Criminal Policy
Ghent University

www.ircp.org

Stéphanie De Coensel
+32 9 264 97 02
Stephanie.DeCoensel@UGent.be

METHODOLOGY

BEST FIT FRAMEWORK SYNTHESIS

aim: combine research results from several studies into a meta-framework

specificities: systematic method to search and select research studies | combines deductive and inductive techniques of analysis | start from one or multiple existing frameworks

research

publications

consultancy

conferences

www.ircp.org



Institute for
International Research on Criminal Policy
Ghent University

Stéphanie De Coensel
+32 9 264 97 02
Stephanie.DeCoensel@UGent.be

methodology

BEST FIT FRAMEWORK SYNTHESIS

- (1) the identification of one or multiple pre-existing frameworks
- (2) the thematic reduction of these theories to create an a priori framework
- (3) the supplementing of the a priori framework with new themes by extracting and coding data from included studies
- (4) the transition from the resultant framework to the final conceptual model

research

publications

consultancy

conferences



Institute for
International Research on Criminal Policy
Ghent University

www.ircp.org

Stéphanie De Coensel
+32 9 264 97 02
Stephanie.DeCoensel@UGent.be

methodology

BEST FIT FRAMEWORK SYNTHESIS

(1) the identification of one or multiple pre-existing frameworks

King & Taylor, 2011*: Borum (2003); Moghaddam (2005); Sageman (2008); Silber and Bhatt (2007); and Wiktorowicz (2004)

(2) the thematic reduction of these theories to create an a priori framework

(3) the supplementing of the a priori framework with new themes by extracting and coding data from included studies

(4) the transition from the resultant framework to the final conceptual model

*King, M., & Taylor, D. M. (2011). The Radicalization of Homegrown Jihadists: A Review of Theoretical Models and Social Psychological Evidence. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 23(4), 602-622.

www.ircp.org

PRE-EXISTING MODELS					A PRIORI FRAMEWORK	
Borum (2003)	Wiktorowicz (2004)	Moghaddam (2005)	Silber & Bhatt (2007)	Sageman (2008)	Concepts	Themes
			Pre-radicalization		Life situation before radical worldview	Pre-radicalization
Grievance – context	Cognitive opening	Psychological interpretation of material conditions	Self-identification	A sense of 'moral outrage'	Receptive Grievances (personal and political)	Awareness & Grievances
Injustice – comparison				Resonance with personal experiences (discrimination)	Perceived injustice; generalisation of injustice	
				A specific interpretation of the world	Foreclosure of ordinary options	Solution-seeking
	Religious seeking	Perceived options to fight unfair treatment			Religious framework	Interest
	Frame alignment		Self-identification	Mobilisation through networks	Interest in the doctrine, willingness to alter belief system Identity-searching; change in behaviour Seeking like-minded individuals	
Target attribution		Displacement of aggression			Creating a target, blaming	Targeting
Distancing / devaluation – Reaction					Dehumanizing the enemy	
	Socialization and joining - fully indoctrinated	"Moral Engagement" Solidification of Categorical Thinking and the Perceived Legitimacy of the Terrorist Organization	Indoctrination		Intensifying beliefs, belief only correct one, identity-construction Increased group bonding Accepting violence as a legitimate political means Willingness to use violence Entering terrorist organization	Indoctrination
Violent tactics		The Terrorist Act and Sidestepping Inhibitory Mechanisms	Jihadisation		Preparatory acts Terrorist act	Implementation

- (1) the identification of one or multiple pre-existing frameworks
- (2) the thematic reduction of these theories to create an a priori framework
common & unique elements: seven themes and eighteen characterizing elements
- (3) the supplementing of the a priori framework with new themes by extracting and coding data from included studies
- (4) the transition from the resultant framework to the final conceptual model

research

publications

consultancy

conferences

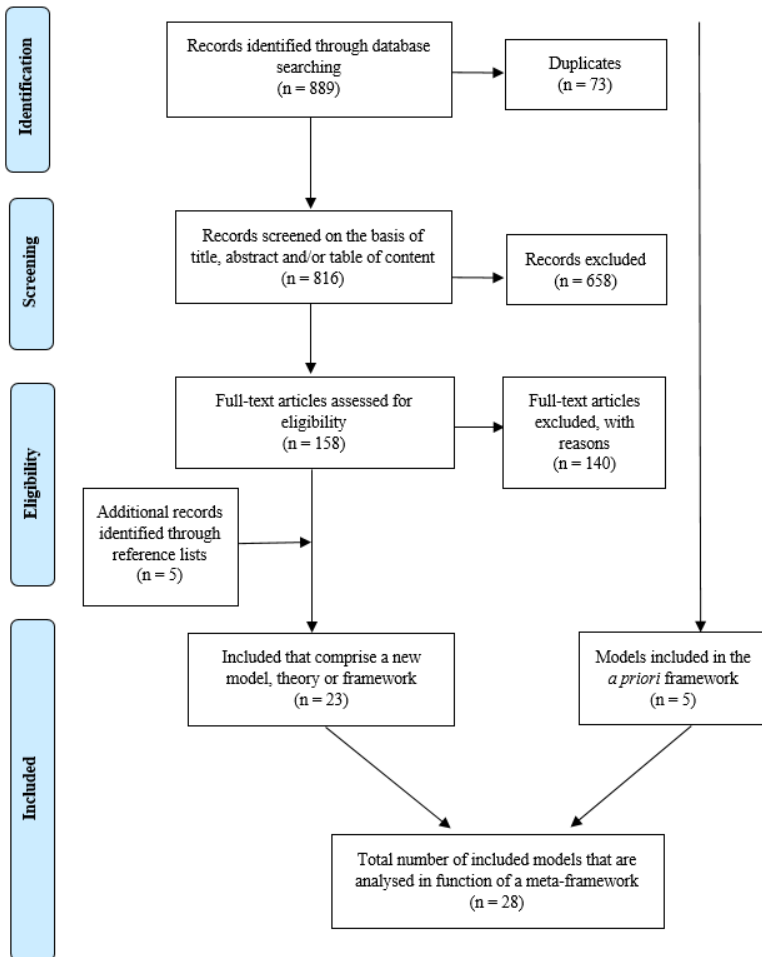


IRCP

Institute for
International Research on Criminal Policy
Ghent University

www.ircp.org

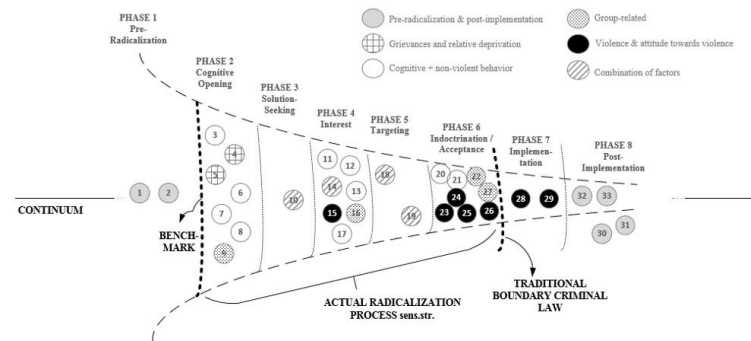
Stéphanie De Coensel
+32 9 264 97 02
Stephanie.DeCoensel@UGent.be



- (1) the identification of one or multiple pre-existing frameworks
- (2) the thematic reduction of these theories to create an *a priori* framework
- (3) the supplementing of the *a priori* framework with new themes by extracting and coding data from included studies
 - searching-, screening- and inclusion-strategy
 - 23 additional research studies
 - 1 extra theme (post-implementation)
 - 15 extra characterizing elements
- (4) the transition from the resultant framework to the final conceptual model

THEMES	CONCEPTS DERIVED FOR CODING (C)	
Pre-radicalization	C1	General population
	C2	Life situation before radicalization (commonalities, profiling)
Awareness & Grievances	C3	Receptiveness
	C4	Grievances <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personal: socio-economic, including poor social integration - Political
	C5	Perceived injustice; generalization of injustice
	C6	Questioning confidence in certain leaders or policies; crisis of legitimacy existing order
	C7	Disillusionment; feelings of insignificance
	C8	Initial exposure to alternate worldviews; sense of awareness
	C9	Acquaintance with certain individuals
Solution-seeking	C10	Foreclosure of ordinary options
Interest	C11	Interest in doctrine; willingness to alter belief
	C12	Religious seeking
	C13	Identity search; change in behaviour
	C14	Social inclusion; break with former life
	C15	Weakening resilience against violence
	C16	Actively seeking like-minded individuals
	C17	Acceptance of the cause
Targeting	C18	Target attribution; blaming
	C19	Dehumanizing the enemy
Indoctrination	C20	Intensifying beliefs; belief one adheres is the only correct one
	C21	Identity-constructing
	C22	Increased group-bonding
	C23	Accepting violence as a legitimate political means; conviction that action is required to support the cause
	C24	Praising and honouring actions of terrorists; broadcasting own intent
	C25	Willingness to use violence; accepting duty
	C26	Behaviour indicative of preparation for action (e.g. going abroad, training camps, etc.)
	C27	Entering terrorist organization
Implementation	C28	Preparatory acts
	C29	Use of violence (including terrorist attack)
Post-implementation (new theme)	C30	Disengagement
	C31	Deradicalization, including self-deradicalization
	C32	Re-engagement
	C33	Reaction criminal justice system

- (1) the identification of one or multiple pre-existing frameworks
- (2) the thematic reduction of these theories to create an a priori framework
- (3) the supplementing of the a priori framework with new themes by extracting and coding data from included studies
- (4) the transition from the resultant framework to the final conceptual model**
integrated meta-framework, visualized by an eight-phased funnel model



research

publications

consultancy

conferences

results

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

- 01 PRE-RADICALIZATION**
- 02 AWARENESS AND GRIEVANCES**
- 03 SOLUTION-SEEKING**
- 04 INTEREST**
- 05 TARGETING**
- 06 INDOCTRINATION**
- 07 IMPLEMENTATION**
- 08 POST-IMPLEMENTATION**

research

publications

consultancy

conferences



IRCP

Institute for
International Research on Criminal Policy
Ghent University

www.ircp.org

Stéphanie De Coensel
+32 9 264 97 02
Stephanie.DeCoensel@UGent.be

01 PRE- RADICALIZATION

Initially included by Silber and Bhatt in their NYPD model

Separate stage that precedes the actual radicalization process

- ☐ at-risk individuals, their social background and their reasons for receptiveness before they radicalized
- ☐ compilation of the general population

research

publications

consultancy

conferences



IRCP

Institute for
International Research on Criminal Policy
Ghent University

www.ircp.org

Stéphanie De Coensel
+32 9 264 97 02
Stephanie.DeCoensel@UGent.be

02

AWARENESS & GRIEVANCES

At the start of actual radicalization process *sensu stricto*

- ☐ increased perceptiveness for a radical worldview, namely the need for a sense of meaning, the need for a response to perceived injustice and the need for social bonding
- ☐ general sense of “disillusionment”
- ☐ perceived discrimination as a consequence of undesirable events or conditions on a personal and/or political level
- ☐ profound questioning of the existing order and the legitimacy of the system
- ☐ sense of “awareness”, in which individuals are exposed to alternative ideas for a first time

research

publications

consultancy

conferences



IRCP

Institute for
International Research on Criminal Policy
Ghent University

www.ircp.org

Stéphanie De Coensel
+32 9 264 97 02
Stephanie.DeCoensel@UGent.be

03

SOLUTION-SEEKING

Less frequent in existing models

- ☐ individuals seek for a possible solution that responds to their needs
- ☐ at this stage: radicalization process often halted, since many people – who share the same grievances – do find an outcome through legitimate means

research

publications

consultancy

conferences



Institute for
International Research on Criminal Policy
Ghent University

www.ircp.org

Stéphanie De Coensel
+32 9 264 97 02
Stephanie.DeCoensel@UGent.be

04 INTEREST

Transformation of awareness into interest in the newly found doctrine | primarily cognitive factors

- ☐ religious seeking
- ☐ identity search and related change in behavior
- ☐ social inclusion and the break with the former life
- ☐ weakening of resilience against violence
- ☐ actively seeking of like-minded individuals
- ☐ acceptance of the cause

research

publications

consultancy

conferences



IRCP

Institute for
International Research on Criminal Policy
Ghent University

www.ircp.org

Stéphanie De Coensel
+32 9 264 97 02
Stephanie.DeCoensel@UGent.be

05 TARGETING

Attributing blame to a certain target and dehumanizing this so-called enemy

- ☐ inhibitory mechanisms are crossed
 - ☐ easier to use violence in later stages
- ☐ “Us versus Them” dichotomy
 - ☐ creation of a common enemy
 - ☐ reinforces the cohesion within the radical group

research

publications

consultancy

conferences



Institute for
International Research on Criminal Policy
Ghent University

www.ircp.org

Stéphanie De Coensel
+32 9 264 97 02
Stephanie.DeCoensel@UGent.be

06

INDOCTRINATION

certain sense of intensification of the concepts elaborated on in earlier stages of the radicalization process

- ☐ intensifying of beliefs and conviction that belief they adhere is the only correct one
- ☐ further construction of a new identity
- ☐ increased group-bonding
- ☐ accepting violence as a legitimate political means and conviction that action is required to support the cause
- ☐ praising and honouring of the actions of terrorists or the broadcasting of one's own intent
- ☐ willingness to use violence and the acceptance of their duty
- ☐ behaviour indicative of preparation for action (e.g. going abroad, training camps, etc.)
- ☐ entering into a terrorist organization

research

publications

consultancy

conferences



Institute for
International Research on Criminal Policy
Ghent University

www.ircp.org

Stéphanie De Coensel
+32 9 264 97 02
Stephanie.DeCoensel@UGent.be

07 IMPLEMEN- TATION

ultimate culmination of the radicalization process

- ❑ only a small minority of people that progresses through certain stages of the radicalization process eventually commits a terrorist act
=NON-LINEARITY
- ❑ not all models end their framework with an implementation stage
- ❑ labelling differs from model to model

research

publications

consultancy

conferences



IRCP

Institute for
International Research on Criminal Policy
Ghent University

www.ircp.org

Stéphanie De Coensel
+32 9 264 97 02
Stephanie.DeCoensel@UGent.be

08 POST - IMPLEMEN- TATION

after the implementation of a terrorist act

- ☐ no part of a priori framework, but added during analysis of 23 supplementing research studies
- ☐ only a small minority of models
- ☐ from disengagement, to deradicalization, to re-engagement and the formal reaction of the criminal justice system

research

publications

consultancy

conferences

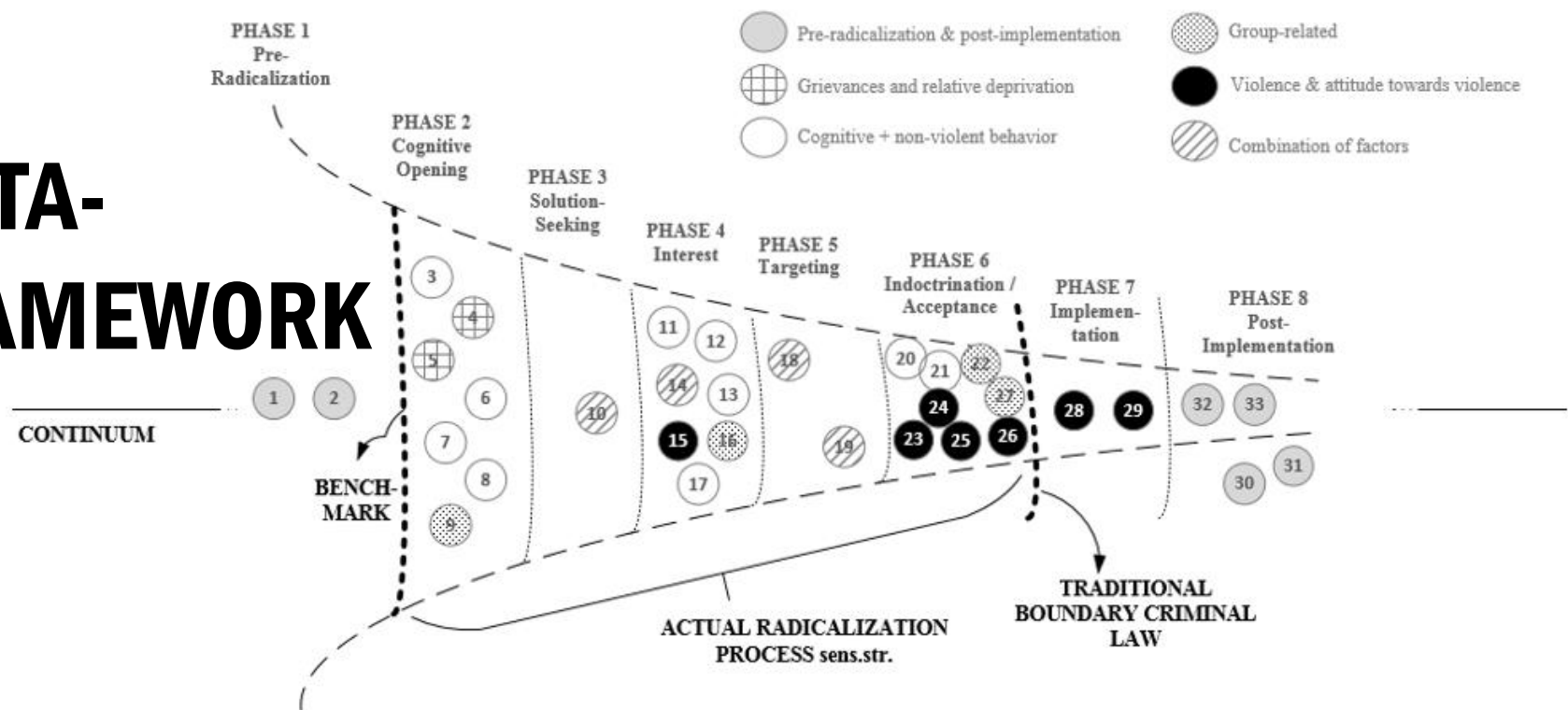


Institute for
International Research on Criminal Policy
Ghent University

www.ircp.org

Stéphanie De Coensel
+32 9 264 97 02
Stephanie.DeCoensel@UGent.be

META-FRAMEWORK



DISCUSSION

sequence of a 'typical' radicalization process from pre-radicalization to post-implementation, while bearing in mind its inherent complexity and highly individual nature

also useful in policy context

tendency to criminalize behavior that corresponds to early phases of the radicalization process

=> **criminal liability is extended** to preparatory acts and even risk-involving behaviour (prior to phase 7, especially within phases 4 to 6)

research

publications

consultancy

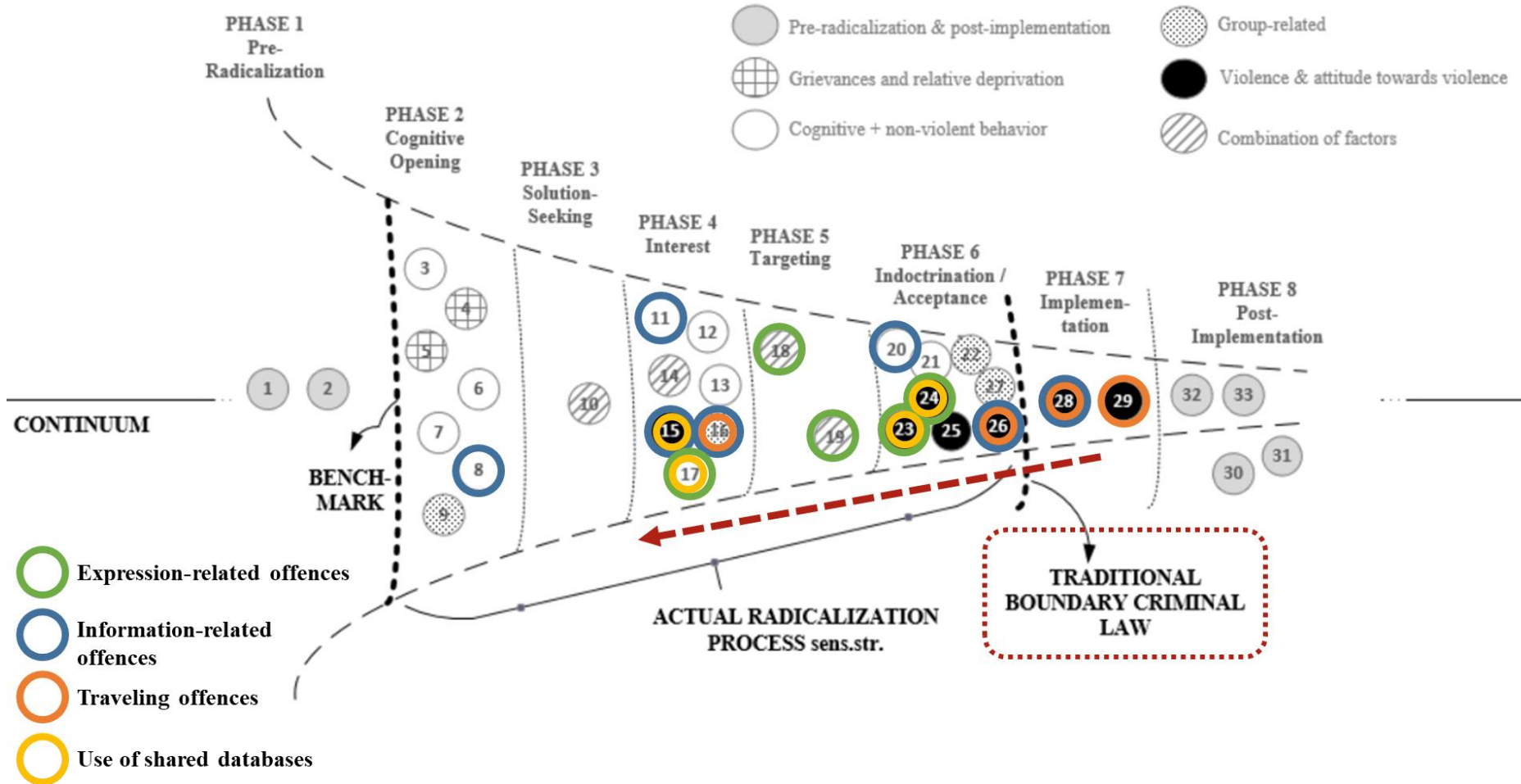
conferences



Institute for
International Research on Criminal Policy
Ghent University

www.ircp.org

Stéphanie De Coensel
+32 9 264 97 02
Stephanie.DeCoensel@UGent.be



DISCUSSION

critical notes

- ☐ radicalization in the sense of “developing or adopting extremist beliefs that justify violence” is but one of the many pathways to terrorism
- ☐ methodological pitfalls of phase models
- ☐ limitations of a review conducted by a single researcher
- ☐ integration of multiple models of a different nature

recommendations further research

- ☐ testing of meta-framework with empirical data, while also including valid comparison groups,
- ☐ differentiations in the meta-framework in terms of the type of ideology and the type of terrorists
- ☐ critical legal analysis of certain criminal law provisions that intervene in early stages of the radicalization process

research

publications

consultancy

conferences



Institute for
International Research on Criminal Policy
Ghent University

www.ircp.org

Stéphanie De Coensel
+32 9 264 97 02
Stephanie.DeCoensel@UGent.be

MORE **IN-DEPTH** ANALYSIS?

S. DE COENSEL, “Processual Models of Radicalization into Terrorism: A Best Fit Framework Synthesis”, *Journal for Deradicalization* 2018, 89-127.

Notwithstanding the limitations of the research: initial incentive to **transcend the fragmented approach** in the field of radicalization research, while making the link to its importance on a policy level

FURTHER QUESTIONS? **Q&A**

research

publications

consultancy

conferences



Institute for
International Research on Criminal Policy
Ghent University

www.ircp.org

Stéphanie De Coensel
+32 9 264 97 02
Stephanie.DeCoensel@UGent.be

References 28 included studies

Borum, R. (2010). Understanding terrorist psychology. In A. Silke (Ed.), *The psychology of counter-terrorism*. Oxon: Routledge. • Cherif, A., Yoshioka, H., Ni, W., & Bose, P. (2009). Terrorism: Mechanism of Radicalization Process, Control of Contagion and Counter-Terrorist Measures. *ArXiv*. • Chuang, Y.-L., Chou, T., & D'Orsogna, M. R. (2018). Age-structured social interactions enhance radicalization. *The Journal of Mathematical Sociology*, 42(3). • Dean, G. (2016). Framing the Challenges of Online Violent Extremism: "Policing-Public-Policies". In M. Khader (Ed.), *Combating Violent Extremism and Radicalization in the Digital Era*. • Dyer, C., McCoy, R. E., Rodriguez, J., & Van Duyn, D. N. (2007). Countering Violent Islamic Extremism: A Community Responsibility. *FBI L. Enforcement Bull.*, 76, 3-9. • Easton, M., Schils, N., Waele, M. D., Pauwels, L., & Verhage, A. (2013). Is er plaats voor 'radicalisme' in onze democratische maatschappij? *Orde van de Dag*, (62), 5-16. • Gill, P. (2007). A Multi-Dimensional Approach to Suicide Bombing. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, 1(2), 142–159. • Griffin, R. (2012). The Metapolitics of Terrorist Radicalization. In R. Griffin (Ed.), *Terrorist's Creed* (pp. 88-110): Palgrave Macmillan. • Hamm, M., & Spaaij, R. (2015). Lone Wolf Terrorism in America: Using Knowledge of Radicalization Pathways to Forge Prevention Strategies. Retrieved from www.ncjrs.gov • Helfstein, S. (2012). Edges of radicalization: Ideas, individuals and networks in violent extremism. Retrieved from ctc.usma.edu. • Horgan, J., & Taylor, D. M. (2011). Disengagement, de-radicalization, and the arc of terrorism: Future directions for research. In R. Coolsaet (Ed.), *Jihadi terrorism and the radicalisation challenge*. • Ingram, H. J. (2013). *The charismatic leadership phenomenon in radical and militant islamism*. Farnham: Ashgate. • Juergensmeyer, M. (2000). *Terror in the Mind of God. The Global Rise of Religious Violence*. Berkeley: University of California Press. • Klausen, J., Campion, S., Needle, N., Nguyen, G., & Libretti, R. (2016). Toward a Behavioral Model of "Homegrown" Radicalization Trajectories. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 39(1). • Lakhani, S. (2013). *Radicalisation as a moral career: A qualitative study of how people become terrorists in the United Kingdom*. (PhD), Cardiff University. • Moghaddam, F. M. (2005). The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration. *American Psychologist*, 60(2), 161-169. • Muhanna-Matar, A. (2017). The limit-experience and self-deradicalisation: the example of radical Salafi youth in Tunisia. *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 10(3), 435-475. • Neo, L. S. (2016). An Internet-Mediated Pathway for Online Radicalisation: RECRO. In M. Khader, L. S. Neo, G. Ong, E. T. Mingyi, & J. Chin (Eds.), *Combating Violent Extremism and Radicalization in the Digital Era* (pp. 197-224). • Pajunen, C. (2015). The Lone Wolf Terrorist: Mechanisms and Triggers of a Process-Driven Radicalization. *Paideia*, 101-113. • Pauwels, L., Brion, F., Schils, N., Laffineur, J., Verhage, A., De Ruyver, B., & Easton, M. (2014). *Explaining and understanding the role of exposure to new social media on violent extremism: an integrative quantitative and qualitative approach*. Ghent: Academia Press. • Precht, T. (2007). Home Grown Terrorism and Islamist Radicalisation in Europe: From Conversion to Terrorism. Retrieved from www.justitsministeriet.dk. • Sageman, M. (2008). A Strategy for Fighting International Islamist Terrorists. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 618, 223-231. • Schuurman, B., & Eijkman, Q. (2015). Indicators of terrorist intent and capability: Tools for threat assessment. *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*, 8(3). • Silber, M. D., & Bhatt, A. (2007). Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat. Retrieved from www.judicialwatch.org. • Sinai, J. (2014). Developing a model of prison radicalisation. In A. Silke (Ed.), *Prisons, Terrorism and Extremism: Critical issues in management, radicalisation and reform* (pp. 35-46). Oxon: Routledge. • Torok, R. (2015). Institutionalised moral reframing: A research based model on Islamic radicalisation on social media. Paper presented at the 8th Australian Security and Intelligence Conference, Edith Cowan University Joondalup Campus, Perth, Western Australia. • Van der Valk, I., & Wagenaar, W. (2010). *Monitor Racisme & Extremisme: In en Uit Extreemrechts*. Amsterdam: Anne Frank Stichting / Amsterdam University Press. • Wiktorowicz, Q. (2004). Joining the Cause: Al-Muhajiroun and Radical Islam. Paper presented at the The Roots of Islamic Radicalism Conference, Yale University.

www.ircp.org

Contact

Stéphanie De Coensel

t. +32 9 264 97 02

f. +32 9 264 79 21

Stephanie.Decoensel@UGent.be

 <https://www.linkedin.com/in/stéphanie-de-coensel-b6b01b109/>

IRCP

Ghent University
Universiteitstraat 4
B – 9000 Ghent